



A PLACE IN THE WOODS

Helen Hoover

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To escape the city, to live close to nature in the beauty and quiet of the wilderness, to try to find within oneself a pioneer resourcefulness of spirit, mind, and hand—it is an almost universal dream. Helen Hoover and her husband made it come true for themselves, and this is the richly told story of how they did it.

As she demonstrated in *The Gift of the Deer*—a book greatly loved and praised—Mrs. Hoover has the gift of sharing with her readers her own profound feeling for the wilderness she has made her home and for the wild animals whom she makes her friends, without destroying the integrity of their wild lives.

But she was not always so at ease with nature. And she tells here how she and her husband, leaving behind everything that was familiar to them, bridged the infinite distance in life-style from Chicago, where they had lived, to a cabin home on the fringe of Minnesota's northernmost wilderness.

Neither of them had so much as a Cub Scout's experience of the woods, and their first year was punctuated with near-disasters. They quickly discovered that a long-time desire for the simple Thoreauvian life was not enough. The obstinance of inanimate objects—the crumbling stone foundation, the leaky roof, the unruly double-bitted ax that *must* be mastered when you depend on a woodburning stove at thirty below—was new to them. The changing seasons astonished the not only with surprising loveliness but with unexpected crises of survival. But they managed, despite their trials, to rebuild their primitive cabin. And, as they worked and learned, they built for themselves, little by little, a rewarding relationship not only with the sparsely settled community but with a marvelous succession of their closest neighbors: wild weasels and jays, squirrels and shy fishers, even bears in the basement.

The reader experiences it all, the hardships and joys, the gradual feeling of becoming connected to earth and elements, of belonging. This is the special delight of Helen Hoover's warm, evocative, and sometimes extremely funny account of the way in which two city people made for themselves *A Place in the Woods*.

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